

Rainbow trout

Oncorhynchus mykiss



Similar Species: Cutthroat trout, chinook salmon
(in Lake Oahe)

Identification: Light body with dark spots, spots extend onto entire tail, tail not deeply forked. In Lake Oahe, rainbow trout can be distinguished from chinook salmon by the tail, which is silver and deeply forked in the chinook salmon, and by the mouth, which is black in chinook salmon and white in rainbow trout. (Cutthroat trout have orange or red “cutthroat” mark on underside of jaw and are found only in limited areas of the Black Hills.)

Rainbow trout are native to only the Pacific Ocean drainages along the west coast of the U.S. and Canada. They have been introduced into many parts of the U.S. and many other places around the world. In South Dakota, rainbow trout are found in the Missouri River system and have been stocked into many impoundments west of the Missouri River. In the Black Hills, rainbow trout are stocked into lakes and ponds. Rainbow trout spawn in the spring, but only limited natural reproduction occurs in Black Hills streams. Most populations in the state are maintained by stocking. They are commonly cultured as a food fish. The steelhead is actually a Pacific Coast rainbow trout. Steelheads have been stocked into Lake Oahe, along with the chinook salmon.

